

ARIEL – BBC STAFF NEWSPAPER TELEVISION CENTRE ASBESTOS COVERAGE

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TC3 was one of eight studios that were sealed off after the discovery of asbestos fibres

Safety assurance on TC asbestos

TELEVISION Service staff have been assured that there is no cause for alarm following the shut-down of virtually all Television Centre's production areas after the discovery of asbestos fibres during tests on the completion of repair work.

Assurances from Managing Director, Network Television Paul Fox came as a major operation was underway to get all the studios back into service as soon as possible, with minimal disruption to programme-making and transmission,

By **LORRAINE PHILLIPS**

and maximum regard for staff safety.

He wrote to all members of the Service immediately after most of the areas were sealed off on Friday, and in an update yesterday morning, saying:

"The BBC's Corporation Safety Officer and the Chief Medical Officer have assured me that, from the evidence available, there is no cause for alarm.

"All static air tests so far taken have been below the control limit set by the

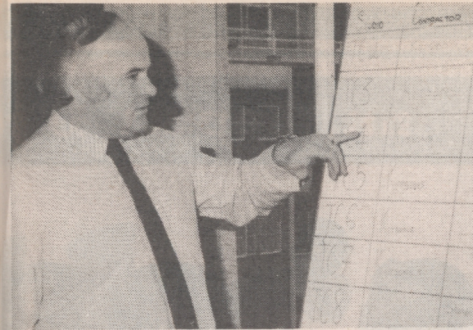
Health & Safety Executive."

He also praised the BBC staff who came in over the weekend to get Television Centre back into operation.

TC3 and the Television Theatre, which was closed on Saturday, are already back in service. All the studios are due to be back in use by June 18, subject to independent assessment and the procedures agreed with the unions.

General manager, Administrative and Accommodation Services, Bob Pugh, said that the majority of areas were sealed

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BOB Pugh scans the asbestos clean-up master plan.

Safety assurance on TC asbestos

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off as a precautionary measure, when, during a test, fibres marginally over the permitted safety clearance level were found in two studios already out of commission.

"A complete shut-down seemed the most sensible course of action, not least to allay staff and union fears," he said.

"The static air tests so far taken have been below the control limit set by the

HSE. However, the well-being of staff is the prime consideration and we therefore decided to take these precautions."

Specialist contractors were called in over the Bank Holiday weekend to carry out a programme of work which involved encapsulation, stripping and thorough industrial cleaning.

Transmission of programmes has not been affected so far, although some productions have been postponed and others transferred to new venues.

Monday's Wogan came out of Television Centre reception, with an audience comprising passing BBC staff, and Top of the Pops was recorded in the lighting gallery of TC8 on Tuesday.

Blue Peter came from the programme's garden and Tomorrow's World was scheduled to have the Television Centre car park as a backdrop.

Two major drama recordings, Dr Who and the Shadow of the Noose, have been postponed as have five Light

Entertainment recordings and one School Programme.

A committee of inquiry will investigate the incident fully. Led by Deputy Director of Programmes, Television, Peter Ibbotson, the committee members are Roger Johnson, Controller Personnel, Television; David Williams, assistant legal adviser; Russell Brownlie, Corporation Safety Officer; and Derek Hedges, Building Services Group team leader B.



Asbestos: the shows go on

THE relocation of Tommorow's World to the car park and reception (above) was among the contingency plans to minimise disruption to BBC output following the discovery of asbestos fibres at Television Centre and the subsequent closure of eight studios and ancillary areas.

Head of Programme Planning Resources Ben Rea told Ariel that the "terrific co-operation" from countless Television Service staff had ensured that transmission had not been adversely affected.

"It hasn't been easy for anybody, but compromises have been accepted with dignity," he said.

These compromises included the recording of Top of the Pops in a lighting gallery; the relocation of new drama, Shadow of the Noose to a Bristol warehouse; an episode of Dr Who being recorded in the Elstree car park; and a scheduled move to Birmingham for this weekend's Russ Abbott programme.

A major operation, using specialist contractors is now underway to perform further tests and thorough cleansing before work resumes in any of the remaining studios. TC8 and the Television Theatre were returned to service last week, following clearance by BBC management safety representatives.

Meanwhile a BBC inquiry led by Deputy Director of Programmes, Peter Ibbotson, is under way. The remit is:

- To determine the policies and procedures established by the BBC for identifying and dealing with asbestos-based materials.
- To evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of these procedures.
- To determine the specific chain of events leading to the removal from service of Television Service studios.
- To assess the degree, if any, of the health hazard involved.

Ariel

BBC STAFF NEWSPAPER

Wednesday, August 10, 1988

Asbestos all-clear for TC studios

STUDIO TC6, the home of Top of the Pops, went back into service on Thursday, completing a major ten-week operation to treat six of Television Centre's eight studios for asbestos contamination.

It was the discovery of asbestos fibres in TC6 back in May which triggered off the emergency operation, Assistant Controller, Resource Operations and Development, John Jarvie told *Ariel*.

"Because of the special problems that this studio presented, we decided to leave it until last," he said.

As soon as the asbestos problem had been identified, the decision was taken to close all affected studios, and a special project group was formed to co-ordinate the massive job of checking and cleaning each in turn, with the least possible disruption to programme production.

"The group included representatives from Premises Operations, Building Engineering Services, P&ID Tel, Programme Planning, Studio Operations and the Central Safety Unit," John Jarvie said.

"At the beginning, we were

working round the clock, co-ordinating the work of teams of specialist contractors who carried out the cleaning, and encapsulation of disturbed asbestos, in each studio."

The completed work in each area had to satisfy both an independent analyst, and a joint management/union inspection team, before final clearance could be given.

"The inspection was meticulous, and we enjoyed a very high level of co-operation with the union's safety representatives," John Jarvie said.

"In all cases, we were satisfied that the work had been carried out to the highest standards. At the end of the day, I'm happy that we made the right decision, and that, with an enormous amount of work, and without undue panic, we've got the studios back in service in the shortest possible time."

While the work progressed, Programme Planning staff were under great pressure to arrange alternative production facilities for output departments — in many cases coming up with ingenious solutions.

"I'm pleased to say that through-

out the whole emergency we didn't lose a single programme," Planning Co-ordinator Simon Mills told *Ariel*.

"On the first weekend, when everything shut down, we wondered how we'd cope," he said. "But our problems were eased by the great co-operation we had from production departments, and from P&ID Tel."

"We were also lucky that it happened at this time of the year, when there is enough flexibility to move programmes around, to Elstree and the regions. If it had happened in the autumn, there would have been more casualties."

Asbestos: two more studios back in use

TELEVISION management is continuing its round-the-clock operation with specialist contractors to bring the remaining five affected studios back into operation following the discovery of disturbed asbestos at Television Centre three weeks ago.

In the last week studio TC2 has been handed back to News and Current Affairs for Breakfast Time and Newsnight, and one of the largest studios, TC3, came

back into service yesterday.

Des Browning, General Manager, Studios Network and Recording, Television, is currently co-ordinating the work programme in each studio.

"We are using specialist asbestos contractors, and separate analysts, licensed to carry out this type of work, plus scaffolders who are at work 24 hours a day in shifts

of 12 hours," he told Ariel.

"Appropriate BBC managers are on hand at all times to advise on the cleaning of technical equipment, lighting hoists, luminaires, and so on."

Meanwhile, the effort to ensure minimal disruption of production by relocation of certain programmes continues.

"We're through the most difficult stage," Head of Programme Planning Resources Ben Rea said, "and the return of TC3 will help greatly to ease our problems."

"Dr Whol is at Elstree for another week, and Blue Peter went to Studio D at Lime Grove on Monday — just a day after it was officially vacated by News and Current Affairs."

"Things are coming back to normal slowly but surely."

Asbestos: TV studios 'thoroughly checked'

BBC television studios affected by asbestos are back in service after being subjected to a "thorough checking and cleaning operation."

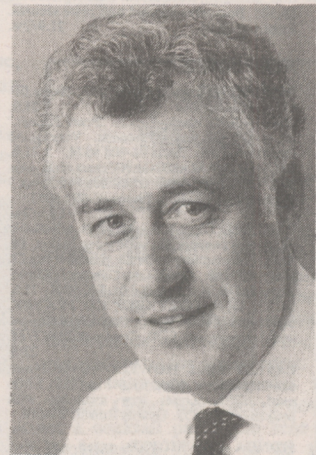
Television Resource Director Cliff Taylor said that following the identification of disturbed asbestos in a number of production studios, specialist contractors were called in to carry out work which involved encapsulation, industrial cleaning, testing and inspection before the areas had been returned to operational service.

Speaking after criticism from the broadcasting union BETA about the way the BBC had handled its asbestos problem at Television Centre, he said that at the time of the incident the Health and Safety Executive had been informed of the situation, and was satisfied with the measures being taken.

Review

At a press conference, BETA attacked the BBC for refusing to co-operate in a joint inquiry, and called for a thorough review of its General Safety Policy.

Cliff Taylor said the BBC was carrying out its own inquiry and added that the Board of Management had taken the



Cliff Taylor
Safety appointments

step this summer of selecting a senior manager in each directorate to hold special responsibility for safety.

In addition, Television would be shortly appointing a manager, Safety Services, to support the existing safety structure.

New procedures on asbestos

NEW procedures for asbestos management and safety are being introduced following the discovery of disturbed asbestos at Television Centre studios.

The procedures are recommended in a two-part report produced by an Asbestos Inquiry Committee after the closure of TC studios in May.

The inquiry team, chaired by Peter Ibbotson, former Deputy Director of Programmes Television, looked into asbestos-related procedures prior to the discovery of damaged asbestos encapsulation material in studio TC6, and into the events which followed, leading to the withdrawal from service of six studios. The studios are now back in service after major remedial work.

Their report recommends:-

- A full survey of all television premises and the identification of all sites containing asbestos.
- New procedures for checking on the condition of asbestos.
- Precise responsibility for asbestos management.
- Full training for staff with specific responsibilities for asbestos management.
- A review of the use of contractors and a clearer definition of their role.
- Clear specifications for the complete cleaning of studios and adjacent areas.
- Revised internal reporting procedures.
- Further independent advice.

In the long term, the report says, a decision must be made

Staff health 'of paramount concern'

— Cliff Taylor

on the necessity and practicality of removing all asbestos from the studio and associated areas.

The report, copies of which have been sent to the unions, prior to consultations with them, is now being actioned by an Asbestos Management Committee, chaired by Cliff Taylor, Director of Resources, Television.

It includes two medical reports, one from an indepen-

dent expert, Professor Anthony Seaton, Director of the Institute of Occupational medicine in Edinburgh, the other from Dr John Newman, Senior Medical Officer, Television.

Professor Seaton writes: "In general, it is fair to say that the hazards of asbestos exposure arise from daily exposure to levels of asbestos many times higher than those likely to have obtained in the TV studios,

and are almost entirely confined to people actually working with or handling asbestos.

"Thus, if anyone in BBC-tv was at risk, it is likely to have been someone whose daily job over years involved removing or cutting asbestos."

The inquiry team considered two deaths in recent years from asbestos-related diseases. It concluded:

Minimal

"They were special cases representing particular occupational hazards which are unrelated to the general level of risk to the great majority of staff working in the Television Service."

Cliff Taylor said: "Asbestos is an emotive subject and we understand people's concern but the medical view is that the risks in Television centre studios are minimal.

"Nevertheless the management committee is already beginning to implement the inquiry report's recommendations. Our aim is to avoid a recurrence of the circumstances which led to last spring's alert.

"More importantly, we are overseeing the introduction of

new procedures — including the appointment of a special project manager — which will ensure that our future policy towards asbestos is co-ordinated and fully effective. The health of our staff is of paramount concern."